

Luige del Puerto

[Arizona Capitol Times](#)

President Barack Obama signed legislation May 14 to freeze the automatic pay increases for members of Congress.

The move comes at a time when politicians have railed against bonuses to Wall Street executives and the economy is still reeling from a severe economic downturn.

"To raise Congressional pay at a time when so many families are still struggling to make ends meet would be unconscionable and glaringly out of touch," said U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell, a Democrat representing Arizona's Fifth Congressional District. Mitchell co-sponsored the measure with Rep. Jim Matheson of Utah.

U.S. Sen. Russell Feingold offered companion legislation in the Senate.

HR5146, which stops a \$1,600-pay hike in fiscal 2011, received bi-partisan approval in the House and Senate last month.

"This sends an important message. The American people are not getting a raise this year and neither should Congress," Mitchell said.

Pete Sepp, executive vice president of the National Taxpayers Union, said the legislation helps restore the public's confidence in the budget process.

Tom Schatz, president of the Council for Citizens Against Government Waste, said it would have been irresponsible for Congressional members to give themselves a pay hike given

the country's economic climate.